

Science Books + Films

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**SKUTCH, ALEXANDER F.** *A Naturalist on a Tropical Farm.* (Illus. by Dana Gardner.) Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980. viii+397pp. \$16.95. 78-64474. ISBN 0-520-03802-9. Index.

**SH-GA ★** *A Naturalist on a Tropical Farm* is an unusual book by an unusual scientist, who has made himself almost a legend by combining an ongoing interest in farming at a remote site in Costa Rica with an intensive study of nesting and migrant birds in that area for almost 40 years. His comments touch on 248 different species of birds, all clearly identified in the excellent index and many of them illustrated in distinctive line drawings. Nearly 100 different kinds of plants are discussed and similarly identified to species in the index, but not illustrated enough for a reader with no experience in the American tropics to recognize them. Various mammals, reptiles and insects also make their appearance through entertaining anecdotes. Human neighbors become personalities, as do some domestic animals. Most of Skutch's thoughtful analysis of his situation on a tropical farm comprises chapters: "Which Should I Protect?" "Cooperation with Ants" and "Photosynthesis and Predation." A gentle account by a considerate man who tries to keep up with scientific literature despite his isolation.—*Lorus J. Milne*

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